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Friends,

Last night, I was proud to stand in front of the 84 newest members of the Memphis Police Department. This graduating class gave us our first annual net gain of officers since 2011 and put us above 2,000 officers. In addition, our administration has hired more officers in our first two years and 18 days than the prior four years combined.

Rebuilding MPD is not the entirety of our efforts to reduce crime, of course, but it's a big item. ([Here's a link](#) to our comprehensive strategy.) It's also complicated, and to understand it means knowing things that happened more than a decade ago.

So let me walk through the timeline of how we got here as simply as I can:

1. In 2007, as we experienced high levels of violent crime, we had 2,000 officers. In my first term on the City Council, beginning in 2008, we prioritized hiring more officers.
2. Between 2008 and 2011, we graduated an average of 182 new officers each year. The headcount rose to 2,452 by late 2011, an all-time high. Violent crime was down some 20 percent from its 2006 peak.
3. From 2012 to 2015, the City drastically reduced recruiting. In those four years, we graduated an average of 41 new officers each year. In 2014, in fact, we didn't hold a single recruit class. (This is why I voted against these budgets.)
4. In 2014, prompted by a state mandate to fully fund our pension, the City changed its benefits, which led to more officers leaving the force. Attrition rose from the usual 100-120 per year to as high as 185 in 2015. (By the way, the yearly pension payment went from 27 percent fully funded to the current 92 percent.)
5. When we took office in 2016, we made rebuilding MPD a priority by 1) increasing recruiting and 2) reducing attrition. We modernized recruiting, enabling things such as online applications for the first time and recruiting out-of-state. We're better compensating officers,

5. including three pay increases and better benefits.
6. We developed the “Best in Blue” recruitment campaign and launched it in our first six months. This brought in roughly six times the applicants of a regular year, and most enrolled in the class that started in March 2017. When that class graduated in August, it was our largest recruit class in more than a decade — 85 new officers.
7. Another class started shortly after that, and it graduated last night. From our modern low of 1,909 officers in early August 2017, we now have about 2,020.
8. It isn’t all about commissioned officers. In 2016, we brought back the police service technician program. PSTs service incidents such as traffic accidents with the goal of freeing up commissioned officers to focus on violent crime. We now have 66 PSTs, partly because we launched the Blue Path program to provide them a free education on the road to becoming a commissioned officer.
9. Also, attrition has fallen. The nationally unprecedented \$6.1 million grant we received from the Crime Commission, most of which went to retention bonuses, has been a tremendous help.

The work is not done — far from it. Our goal is 2,300 officers by 2020.

Managing the winter weather: Our solid waste crews returned to work this morning and will be out through the weekend collecting from garbage carts only. We continue to ask for your patience and understanding; the two storms coupled with the holiday weekend and near-record cold temperatures provided a unique set of circumstances that we’ve worked to manage.

With 6,800 lane-miles of streets spread across 325 square miles, we have a difficult task in clearing the streets. But we’ve still worked to meet the challenge. In the past week, we’ve used 27,000 gallons of brine, 910 tons of salt and 2,072 labor hours, with many crews working 24-hour shifts.

Here’s sending a big thank you to all our city employees who put in the extra hours this past week.

State of the City: The state of our city is strong and getting even stronger. That’s part of the message I shared in Wednesday’s State of the City speech, [the full text](#) of which we sent to this email group later in the day. I’m grateful for [Otis Sanford’s view of the speech](#) in his WREG-TV commentary.

Welcome to Memphis: I was honored to represent the city last weekend at the inauguration of Dr. Marjorie Hass, the 20th president of Rhodes College. I agree with her that “Rhodes is a truly extraordinary place” and great for our city. Forty percent of its graduates stay in Memphis.

Honoring Dr. King: Monday marked another meaningful Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Memphis. At Monday’s events, I shared this quote from Dr. King’s “Mountaintop” speech delivered in our city the night before he died: “We are saying that we are determined to be men. We are determined to be people. We are saying — We are saying that we are God’s children.”

What more iconic representation of that than the I AM A MAN signs of our 1968 sanitation workers? As we reflect this important year, let us all reflect on those signs, what they mean, and what we hope they will continue to mean for our society.

Yours,



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